

Vol. 10. No. 2

December, 1946

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Canadian
POETRY
MAGAZINE

VOLUME 10
No. 2 — DECEMBER, 1946

Published by
THE CANADIAN AUTHORS' ASSOCIATION

Canadian Poetry Magazine

A quarterly magazine published by The Canadian Authors' Association for the encouragement and the development of Canadian verse.

Annual subscription, two dollars; single copies, when available, fifty cents.

All poems published in the magazine will be paid for at the uniform rate of fifteen cents a line.

The Editors do not wish to consider for publication any verse that has already been printed elsewhere.

A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be enclosed, if return of manuscript is desired.

Individual criticism of verse submitted cannot be undertaken by the magazine.

Address correspondence to Canadian Poetry Magazine, Post Office Box No. 12, Station H, Toronto 13, Ontario.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

The Canadian Authors' Association established the Canadian Poetry Magazine to stimulate the production of fine verse in Canada. The publication of the preceding nine volumes was largely made possible through the generosity of Foundation Supporters, whose gifts supplemented the Magazine's receipts from subscriptions and advertisements.

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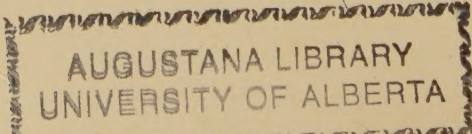
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FROM

LONGMANS, GREEN & Co.

Canadian POETRY MAGAZINE

VOL. 10, No. 2.

DECEMBER, 1946

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: EARLE BIRNEY.

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

DR. E. J. PRATT, C.M.G., ANNE MARRIOTT, CHARLES BRUCE,
PATRICK WADDINGTON, ROY DANIELLS.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: A. H. O'Brien (*Business Manager*)
Watson Kirkconnell, Amabel King, Mona Cannon,
Dr. J. Markowitz, M.B.E.

EDITORIAL

We had written for this space a number of rather lugubrious remarks on such subjects as: why Canada needs the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*; why the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* needs Canada, and Canadian subscribers and donors; why we are partial to both traditional and experimental verse; why, nevertheless, we have to reject the great mass of contributions pouring in; why we haven't time to answer requests for criticism. Then we began to think that perhaps all this has been said before. And so we looked up the editorials in the first two volumes of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*. Sure enough, we found all our points had been made and well made by previous editors and contributors. Consequently, we have dropped our own efforts in the basket in order to reprint in this issue extracts from the comments of Dr. E. J. Pratt, and Mr. N. A. Benson, ten years ago. We are doing this not because we are too lazy to write our own editorials, but because we desire to demonstrate, at this time, the fact that our own policy is primarily a return to the principles expressed and practised by the founders of this magazine. Also, we like the way they said it.

Ends and Means

(From the Foreword of E. J. Pratt to *Canadian Poetry Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 1936.)

"For some time past, the desire has been growing among people interested in the poetry of this country for a national magazine devoted exclusively to verse. It was felt that though popular journals and academic reviews offered abundant scope for Canadian literary expression through the channels of prose, the general position for verse contributions was in the backyard spaces of the periodicals. The explanation given is the far greater marketability of short stories, sketches, and articles dealing with the political and economic issues of the day. After all, the concern is with public consumption, and fiction answers the appetite like a dinner gong.

It is hardly to be expected that anything like a corresponding demand may be created for poetry, but at least it is possible to stimulate interest in the art by drumming up a larger audience and by giving recognition to works of distinction through publication and awards. There still remains in the minds of some people the self-imposed doctrinaire notion that anything so precious and sacrosanct as a poem should never appear on the bargain counters or be tarnished with the trade and truck of the world. It is likely that such a notion had its origin in the psychological compensation which occasionally comes to a creator who, finding his work neglected on this earth, feels that the only Board of Assessors competent to pass judgment is a council of eternity. Of all the arts, poetry is the one which gets the least tangible results, but, while there may not be for many years to come a flattering balance struck between reward and the time and craftsmanship involved in creative writing, yet the disparity may be somewhat redressed by a wisely fostered interest

in the art and by whatever returns in the coin of the realm may be secured through the help of finance committees.

Canada lags far behind other countries in this respect. Not indeed is the backwardness shown in regard to quality or quantity of production. We believe that the highest grade sifted from the mass can be placed without prejudice with what is in the best bins of other countries—but the intelligent sympathies of the public are indispensable to the future success of the craft. The United States, besides offering many substantial prizes, keeps alive, if not flourishing, more than forty magazines which publish nothing but verse and critical comments, and a few of these are responsible for the discovery of several major American poets of the twentieth century. The time is well advanced for Canada to initiate its own movements in the same direction.

To this end, the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* is launched under the auspices of the Canadian Authors Association. It is not intended to displace, but rather to supplement the year-books which have already done excellent pioneer work in presenting regional output. Its policy is ambitious enough to formulate the following program. It will pay for all verse printed, although contributors are admonished against purchasing vacation tickets to Miami on the strength of the proceeds."

Literary Policy

(From the "Comment" of E. J. Pratt, Vol. 1, No. 2, April, 1936.)

"The accepted policy of the magazine is towards the tolerant consideration of genuine poetic effort and against identity with any form of aesthetic, whether old or new.

We believe that the long-established modes are far from their point of exhaustion and are everywhere giving evidence of fresh vision and vitality. We believe, also, that they have no monopoly on the creative spirit, for there is just as abundant proof that the various empirical approaches today are leading to results of indubitable poetic merit. Generous latitude should be given to subject-matter and points of view. No segment of life which has any significance ought to be discarded on the ground that it belongs to the *profane* areas of prose. And with regard to form, the same hospitality must be extended, for there is no reason to affirm that there should be less diversity in the treatment than in the material—always subject, however, to the right of the blue pencil to go through the meaningless lay-out of a fatuous sentiment."

On Poetry, Good and Bad

(Editorial, Vol. 1, No. 3, July, 1936.)

"With a very small staff, it has become absolutely impossible to answer requests for criticism, or to give instructions on how to write poetry, or to return manuscripts that have not been accompanied with self-addressed, stamped envelopes. To all these, however, who have asked us if they are wasting their time writing poetry, a blanket answer is possible. No one ever wastes time writing poetry for his own amusement, but writing and publishing poetry are very different matters. Thus, there is a good side and a bad side to this flood of unpublished, and for the most part, unpublishable poetry. That so many people should want to write poetry is good; that they should all seek publication indicates that they have very little idea of the amount of craftsmanship necessary to produce a poem which can be read with profit and pleasure by a large number of people. Our job is to print

the best of the material submitted to us, and thereby publish some of the best poetry being written in Canada. It is not our business to absorb the vast quantity of competent but undistinguished verse that every locality produces.

A poem can be written only by some one who knows how to write; there is no exception to that rule. Poetry is an exciting, difficult craft, and it takes years of hard work, and education, and a sense of language. Rhyme and metre do not make a poem; they produce by themselves nothing but doggerel. The real flesh and blood of poetry lies in turns of phrases, vivid images, new and unusual thoughts and manners of expressing them. A good poem is good because it is an unusual, imaginative, arresting way of writing English . . .

To be able to use this language, one must learn it, and that takes, among other things, reading. Practically all the great poets of our language were very highly educated, and the majority were scholars of enormous learning, commanding a large number of languages living and dead . . . The reason is very simple: the poet is a literary man, and he has to know something about his trade. Too many of our contributions betray no familiarity with the great body of English poetry other than what has been printed in the school reader, and school readers are frequently more interested in moral sentiments than in poetry. Of course, reading the classics is not everything: this is the twentieth century, and just as anyone who has never heard of an automobile is likely to get knocked down crossing a street, so anyone who has never heard of a prominent living poet is likely to get a rejection slip. People will always try to resist reading modern poets, but very few ever succeeded in becoming good poets who took that attitude to the poetry of their

own time. Contemporary poetry should be studied by everyone who wishes to add something further to it. It is to help such students that the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* has been started."

Why We Need Money

(Editorial, Vol. 1, No. 4, March, 1937.)

"Much of the work done in the promotion of the magazine and even in the actual operation of getting it issued is voluntary; it is not run for profit; it has no other objective than the enlargement of the poetic vision of Canada.

We want to build up a solid subscription list . . . which would make the quarterly a self-sustaining and self-respecting medium existing and flourishing in its own right, without apologies. Hence, we are making this appeal to all interested in the poetic craft—to our present subscribers for their renewals, to our Foundation supporters, to the local branches of the Authors' Association, to poetry groups, and to the reading public generally for the maintenance and development of an organ of expression which is bound to exert a vital influence upon our cultural future."

A Christmas Suggestion

(From an Editorial by Nathaniel A. Benson, Vol. 2, No. 2, October, 1937.)

"We would earnestly ask each subscriber to consider the giving of a year's subscription to the magazine as the ideal Christmas gift for any friend interested in poetry. If each loyal subscriber could get one more subscription, the business executive would feel that the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* had become the permanent vehicle for a living Canadian literature."

POEMS

A THING SHARED

The pale thin child runs from me. He is lost
simply in being, and the sword he waves
decapitates the flowers, heaps their graves.
He doesn't know that when our two paths crossed

I smiled to think that there was something shared,
not talked about, quite secret. He and I
both caught against us something that went by
below, and meant what no one ever said.

Something so quiet and so lost we hide
it nearly always, yet its quietness is
stored, brimming up in us, and its small kiss
brushes the future over every stride.

As though the paleness in us has to knot
and grow a little forward, so the rest
of us can have a feature and a quest
and look unnoticed when the mind peers out

from two blue eyes and sees the summer state
itself in images and joys—and where
we are all brilliant and particular
be general, and stare direct at fate

endlessly, like a question. Isn't it
just there where we're so much ourselves that we
are led away by a great mystery
and walk in incompleteness like a street

far graver than the flimsy streets of towns—
like a triumphal avenue, half shade,
half solid lonely marble; which is laid
enormously across and on and on . . .

No wonder then that boys will often stay
a long time there, with hunger for their camp,
or bitter youths will plunder with contempt
the white swathe where the women walk away

towards . . . towards what? Isn't there a gate
somewhere, at least the expectation of
long roads made round and radical by love
and public buildings, private homes made great?

The pale child's far away. Perhaps I've spoiled
my chance of this. But though my head goes round
in circles, I have touched on sacred ground
and wade a little deeper in the world.

Patrick Anderson.

NUNS

In practical black for God's perpetual downpour
across green lawns
in April rains
an ambulation of young and lovely nuns
who move the folds of shadow
in processions like swans and follow
the luxury of sorrow through ruins of rain.

Putting up silk umbrellas in God's blood
and moulding muscles
of spiritual veils
in which their profiles disclose discreet smiles
they move cocooned in the ineffable
their wax hands holding the chill blood of beads.

And O the long tough licorice of prayer
twisting their mouths,
their girlish breaths,
their souls of peppermint fly to Christ's door:
like cameras they keep out of the picture,
like grates that yearn for burning on their bars
through our long sensual summer
withdraw behind cold fires of ferns and flowers.

Patrick Anderson.

FRUSTRATION

Is this what it is to be old?

Numb hands outstretched,
clear light milk white but cold;

Beauty sharp etched
wounding and dumb;

Fireglow ash hidden,
impotent;

Star-reaching tree, deep rooted, storm defiant,
barren, fruitless, bare.

Farhungry sails wind forgotten,
slack and still.

Had youth but known, death's sting were drawn.

Mary Elizabeth Colman.

L'ANSE DES MORTS

Fresh from high hazards of the northern skies
And windy splendours of their journeyings,
In early mist the seagulls fling their cries,
Sweeping the cove with patterns from their wings.

The foggy bay is throbbing with their sound ;
Salt weeds are trembling in the ebbing tide ;
And on unfathomable errands bound,
The nether firmaments of fishes ride

Echoing counterpoint to utmost reach.
Rhythms awaken in the death-still sea ;
The children shout along the living beach,
Time's loud with life, joy surges up in me.

And mem'ry comes to souls lost in the deep
Of Dead Men's Bay, a dream within their sleep . . .

Leo Cox.

THE SHADOWS

Shadows there are, mixed in the other shadows,
Wandering shadows cast by castaway bodies,
Stumbling and shambling through the city's hades
Like ghosts of unknown widowers and widows

With eyes that have burned out, eyes of stone,
Eyes that screen, eyes that do not accuse
Because having seen the unseeing they refuse
To see more eyes that will not see their own.

Buy a pair of laces, a pencil? Help a guy
Get some supper. Could you spare a dime

For a bed sir? Having one hell of a time,
With any sort of job I might get by.

Columns of shadows, each computing higher
The multiplication of darkness, the sum of ire.

Robert Finch.

THE KEEPSAKE

It is incarcerated in the heart where
Though no one else can see it I can see
In spite of lock and key for it is key
And lock, this superannuated hardware.

It is a jewel, cut, and once was set.
Forced from that setting now it hides inside
A case whose walls of antiquated pride
Have hardened half to crystal, half to jet.

It is a flower in an empty room
Whose sweet persistence nothing will explain
Since neither door nor window can obtain
Permission for the sun to bring his broom.

It is a name, and whilst all those who bear it
Can hear me dare it, still they do not hear it.

Robert Finch.

POEM

The stick laid down, the club
dethroned, in the crushed wild
flowers tamed and soon
buried in the perfume now defiled
by barbarous feet led down
the valley in the wash of love,
recall the weapons used
in hate on the bare hills above.

And in the odorous bed, by
the side of the stick thrown
away, passes to love my
heart, my hate all gone,
the hills departed, left
decyphered in the maze
of leaves in the summer wind,
the code destroyed for the ways
of love; and on the green plain
restored no shadow lies,
no mount of fear, no hill,
to break the prairie of your eyes.

R. A. D. Ford.

ANIMUS ET CORPUS

Who prises the blue mountain is stumbled by a hair:
Soul's pulley that raises range
And all this given granite,
Vision's tackle, veer and vaulting,
Strives its ropes and roundings
Nail and crossbeam
Heaves the, gradually, very Himalaya
To the palm of god
Is fickled by a hair.

Crass, fell, momentous filament!
Touched by the temporary wind,
Heft and hoist are down
More than was hung by that
Of Damocles and dangled:
Soul's reach and centurions' guarding
Good target crossed by a hairline
And heir to that cross, mine
By sinning done.

Ralph Gustafson.

RENDEZVOUS IN STANLEY PARK

Over against the hard vale
 Silencing and silent
Is this pair of hands
Clasped like a sweeping mist
 Soft and repellent.

It repels them who love,
 Who walk, after talking;
Who try to recall a phrase
Not knowing who was
 Quietly speaking.

It tells of a bitter day
 And silently dredges
Now a soft white but soon
A dull black hard ridge among
 Scores of ridges.

Can the lips sweeping through
 Silence be warm?
Can the caught skirt, the taut
Blindness of these loves
 Ever unlearn?

Ronald Hambleton.

THE BRIDGE

[The following poem was awarded the \$25.00 prize in the first of a series of annual competitions established by Mrs. Maida Parlow French. See particulars elsewhere in this issue.]

He was a supple, bronze giant of a man
Who knew his lifetime's gossamer-frail span
Could be a sturdy bridge that stretched into
A shining future; saw the span upheld

By two tall sons who watched the fir-trees felled,
House built to last a century. . . . The blue
Eyes like the father's blazed with the same vision.
Yes, they, like him, had made their great decision—
To build a span for their own sons to follow.
They, too, found comfort in the dimpled hollow,
The warm, soft grasses and the hill's green cap;
The field that held the harvest in its lap,
Sunlight and rain and sweet, enrichening seasons.

Thus as one man these three men strove, and won
Against the frost's attacks, the age-old treasons
Of weevil, hail and drought. Son after son,
They held the farm, until their names were part
Of a land whose heart beat closely with their heart,
Their brown hands building, quietly but sure
A span of dreams, a bridge that would endure!

Pauline Havard.

SOU' EASTER

All night we lay to anchor in an open bay,
and I was awake, as heaving hull yanked chain,
listening to rattling rain and shrieking stay,
and groaning timbers bending to the strain.

Deep in fo'castle blackness, shut in by screaming night,
I remembered my love in the southland,
a dusk with the warm rain falling, the white
of her arms and throat, her gently moving hand.

Now the black turns grey! Pull up the hook!
Set stay-sail to steady her! We'll run
before it to the cape, then turn and buck
our way through storm to south and sun.

Feel the diesel point to sea's top,
then race and rattle down the trough, foam
lashing high to masthead,
feel the screw's thrust, driving us home.

Deep in summerland I'll forget
vessel's straining, and grey sea's breaking.
I shall hear only her breath in the quiet
night, and turn to sleep from waking.

Vic Hopwood.

June, 1942—Dixon Entrance.

ELIOT PRAISED

Eliot praised the long dead Donne
Who saw the skull beneath the fun.
They both were thinking upside down ;
Our flesh is not the foolish clown
That dances bones till they fall down.
It is the force that shapes the stone
And lifts it up as Rheims and Rhone.

Vic Hopwood.

QUEBEC LIQUOR COMMISSION

Nonetheless Ali Baba had no richer cave,
nor lamps more sensitive Aladdin's thumb
than this cave, and these lamps which, at the touch,
evoke the growing slave,
and change the rag-poor world to purple-rich.
"O Visier, wrapped in all knowledge and experience,
bring me, bring me in a flower of air,
the scent of the world's motion, the pollen, the fire,
the fumes of magnificence!"
"Your servant, my Lord, has done according to your
desire!

Nineteen

And brought you also the pleasures of the skin about the
round,
the sycophancy of glass, the palm's cool courtier,
and the feel of straw, all rough and rustical,
by some king's daughter donned;
and for your royal eyes, your Ishmael
with rub and abracadabra and obeisance brings
those forms and shapes, that harem opulence
that my Lord dotes on; and, of the same scope
their voices, like happenings
on cushions behind curtains, like whispers at the thrilled
ear's lobe."

"Well done! my sudden and slick man, and above all, well
done
in the conjuring of those mischievous genii
who nip at the paps of palate, hop on the tongue,
in the throat make merry and fun!
O, they go tumbling in the paunch's nets! O rung
by rung, disporting, they climb into the brain's bazaar!
Wonderful are their tricks and somersaults,
such ingenuities as do make a king forget
the troubles that there are
even for kings, the rag-poor past, the purple that may
set."

A. M. Klein.

THE SPINNING WHEEL

You can find it only in attics or in ads,
heirloom a grandmother explains, woodcut
to show them native, quaint, and to be had
at the fee feudal; but
as object it does not exist, is aftermath
of *autre temps* when at this circle sat
domesticity,
and girls wearing the black and high-necked blouse
at its spokes played house.

Now it is antique, like the fleur de lys,
a wooden fable out of the olden time,—
as if the epileptic loom and mad factory
that make a pantomime
out of this wheel do so for picturesqueness
only, and to achieve a fine excess,
not for the dividend
surely. No. Just to preserve romance,
the rites, the wage-rates of old France.

Symbol, it still exists, the seigneur still,
though now drab and incorporate, holds domain
pre-eminent; still, to his power-foaming mill
the farmer brings his grain
his golden daughters made banality;
and still, still do they pay the seigneurie
the hourly corvée,
the stolen quotient of the unnatural yields
of their woven acres and their linen fields.

A. M. Klein.

POST MORTEM

It was a long hard job that had to be done,
Or so it seemed. There was no other way,
No other way out that anyone could see,
Not any that knew or cared what it means to be free.
Nobody liked it much this time, they say,
But it wasn't a thing you could quit when you'd once
begun.

You that worked at the job and lived, or worked and died,
Surely you read, some time, a moment's meaning
Into your danger. But it could not be told.
Not to the poor nor the rich, to the young no more than
the old.

Here with the whole world's thickness for our screening
If we said we knew what it was all about, we lied.

Twenty-one

We know now that no matter what we said
There was no conviction, there was no consolation.
The words were here, and everyone pretended
Or hoped, that the words, the terrible and splendid
Words, were the holy substance of salvation.
But everyone only knew that the dead were dead.

What have we learned from our triumph and their
disaster?

We have learned that the dead next time will die a good
deal faster.

Now, in our innocent way, we shall try, as we did try,
To build a new and a better world. But why?

L. A. MacKay.

WET EVENING WITH STREET-CARS

Vague fat red cars
Down the shifting street
Spark and wobble
On growling feet,

And greasy clouds
Snakily tie
Hoarse leaden knots
In the rat-furred sky.

L. A. MacKay.

WINTER SUNRISE

Shot through the shutter on the blue wall
A clot of sunshine yellow as gall.
The shutter laddered gold and gray,
Four long straight snake-bellies brimmed with day.
The window-glass, a shimmering noon,
Twists parapets in a hot lagoon,
While the dusty transom clouds itself
To a Roman jar on a gallery shelf.

L. A. MacKay.

MOONSET

Dark in dark air by the dark lake you stand
And underneath,
The scaly moon into the shadowy sand
Sinks his bright teeth.

There is a sober stillness in the air,
And in your eyes
Wisdom, that knows the moon now sinking there
Will never rise.

L. A. MacKay.

IN A LIBRARY

Groping among the stones of this dry landscape where the fossil printed bones
re-state enigma, where the delicate shell
rests on the mountain, where the tawny hills
tomb the lost people, and the plaque of clay
outlasts the living artery and cell

explore the legend, while the street outside
fills with the rising voices; while the time
builds its own scaffold, mounting self-impelled
becomes its own destroyer; and the slow
pressure of history hardens in the stones
another age recorded in its bones.

Floris Clark McLaren

NETTLE-SHY

Question:

I, being shy of nettles, would pose this:
Find me this side Arabia 'tears' of myrrh
Numbing the point-of-pin
Thin thrusts that disrupt my hours;
So may I sense the sun of recompense
Lining the checkering cloud.

Twenty-three

For you who are mover of mountains
Great drums roll;
And the waters are oceans beneath your keels;
Persimmons and passion fruit fly to your nod;
Thistles and thorns skate harmless on your skin:
You, mover of mountains,
Striding as strides a giant
On your regardless way.

Answer:

If only the whicker of a small stream
You seem to hear;
The tangy flavour of the wild plum for your delight;
Find this to compensate for prick-of-pin:
Who knows the tear of thorns knows too
Perfume of briar rose.

M. Eugenie Perry

TWO POEMS OF DEATH AND TRANSFIGURATION

1. DEATH OF THE POET

Considered as a corpse, he takes a meaning—
Master of mourning; night was his delight.
Death dreams, but ever deadly in that dreaming
His fear will fool him, and this fool will fight.

When love is buried, and the hollowed shell
Remains an empty sign that tears are dull;
When angled bones map out the body's bounds;
And granite index marks the clientele,
His name becomes a synonym for fear:
His eyes become all space; his breath all winds.

Birth-pain and growing, death-pain and decay
Repeat the cycle centred in his clay.

2. DEATH BY WATER

Knowing the winter sun,
The marrow and the bone
Will sing of living men,
Who walked wing-footed in the day,
And died when it grew dark.

They left us on the edge
Of the sea's surge
On that last day, but spoke
No words when the sun changed,
And the wind became a kiss.

What did they see, the lovers
Of the warm world? A crowd
Of shadows seated on the sand,
Waiting for the wild waves
And the hairy seaweed clutch.

And going back, the moan
Reminded them of men,
But as they turned again
Beholding the waters' new glow
Hurried on to their homes.

So much we saw in that world
Of water. Finding the wild
Waves in death grew calm
And the music made the bone sing
As the body became a cage.

Mario Prizak

GRANITE FACES

Long patchy fields, immobile,
stretch indifferently by
like granite, a face that never changes,
a face that's never flushed

on the land lips grow parched
cake the blood like crust on skin
and wordless men move quietly by, unknown;

breathing grass, and the livid,
never grapple to an all-out fight
with elements; but in the slow
attrition of wills, of the mute against the immutable,
derive each other's casts.

Long lean faces
like the endless soil
stare at the mountains
and no one stirs in recognition.

Nathan Ralph.

NOT THAT IT MATTERS

on the huddling corners of the street
where teeth are dice rattling
for liquor or a night with a woman
where a gang of toughs
are sentries to a lane
and a pair of mutton hands or knuckle dusters
can make the most ignorant say uncle
and smile obsequiously

along some unfrequented avenue
where superannuated stores hobble along
with old men
and stop in playgrounds or by a fountain
to finger youth and steal its untrammelled
bloom
the youngsters run up and down the streets
and hit blind alleys . . .

not that it matters that old men weep,
or young ones lose their eyes
staring frantically at wooden fences,
not that it matters
that a pedestrian has been hit
or an old woman robbed along a block

not that it matters that a stray
carries grievances on cuffs and cheeks
for to-morrow comes
and a passerby cannot see anymore a cut mouth
as he turns a corner.

Nathan Ralph.

FALCON AT INNISFRAY

Diana-like, in leathered sleeve and glove
You strode across the paddock where a sky
Of Irish blue made all the green hills glad
And left the misted glens and meadowlands
Wrapt in a timeless peace as soft and warm
As your half-smiling lips.

And then you laughed,
Laughed the curt laugh of Celtic unconcern,
And bent above the creel that was a cage
Of breathing want, of waiting beak and claw,
And with quick hands released the tufted hood
And let the sweet light greet the agate eyes,

Twenty-seven

The keen and rounded eyes that quietly scanned
Earth's arch of azure for some fluttering wing,
The eyes that through sheer hatelessness remained
Thrice hateful with their cool desire to kill.

With arm outstretched you held your falcon there,
The sleek barred frame that stood a feathered blade,
The tapering wings that were twin curves of power,

The streamlined flow of lithe and sinewed flesh
That housed within its softness fatal strength.
Then from its cage you set the pigeon free,
A dove-grey thing of grace and gentle days
Whose first and last defence was merely flight;
And as it circled off you calmly loosed
The leather jess and gave the falcon's neck
A little stroke of love.

The opened wings,
Quick pounding on the air, sent arrowing up
The trailing talons, the tense body framed
For comet flight, the curved and sabered beak
As pointed as the shears of Atropos
And quite as quick to rend and tear apart
The threads of puzzled life.

Up, up it went,
A hunger and a threat on hurrying wings
That circled craftily through crystal space
Then at some phantom stairhead flattened out
And quick became a bullet through the blue,
A shooting star, a whistling arrow in
The sun-washed peace of heaven.

As it swooped
Down on the dove-grey fluttering thing of fear
That saw and knew the shadow floating small
Above the checkered fields, the frailer wings
Forgot their weariness and frenziedly

Beat on across the lanes of azure light.
But from the cloven air a thunderbolt
Descended as those aching wings throbbed on;
Out of etherial silence came the strike,
The shrilling downward sweep, the arrowed shape,
The singing arc of flight that swallowed space,
The quick sting of the taloned claw, the cloud
Of loosened feathers as the quarry looped
And fell away, recovered, and flew on
In frantic terror, wavering as it went.
But prompt the wider pinions climbed again
And from their tower essayed the final swoop
Of thwarted hunger, the malignant stab
Of beak and claw.

Then came the ruffled fall
Of wings that nevermore would move in flight;
And from your pursed-up lips a whistle shrilled.
"Come back, my beauty," your glad voice called out,
And with that docile killer at your feet,
So like a bloodied blade back in its sheath,
You laughed and asked me why I frowned at what
For countless seasons was the sport of kings.

Then, turning from the beak that quietly tore
The pink flesh from the pigeon's draggled breast,
I studied you, who seemed so made for love,
Whose breathing bosom must have been as soft
As swan's-down in its white-globed tenderness.

"What is it troubles you?" your curved lips asked.
But the question went unanswered. For I saw,
Or seemed to see, a menace furred and fanged
Between those hills of happy green, a lithe
And crouching thing encased in tawny fleece
And flowing line of limb that served to mask
The tigress heart that gives no thought to pain,
The pard-like grace that finds its goal in grief.

For you and your unhooded falcon seemed
An emblem of all Ireland's clouded ways,
The softness sheathing smiling bitterness,
The moated dun beneath the meadow's peace,
The spike and halberd in the crumbling rath,
The old ironic plan of wasted pride
And brooding unconsidered enmities
That like a sword-blade cuts your land in two
And leaves the mild delusive loveliness
Of all your glens so dark, beneath the green,
With wasted blood, so bitter with the bones
Of kings who crowned their faded days with hate
And fought and died, and now forgotten sleep.

Arthur Stringer.

I

Along with meadowed mammals I have grown
My bones to call the striking hour of thunder;
In bovine company I huddle under
The tree the lightning renders.

I'm hung with sea-weed, winding in its caul
The nightmare of a carp whose blood runs cold,
A crab who apes my crawl.

My lens is grafted from a jungle eye
To focus on the substance of a shadow's
Shadow on the sky;

My forest filtered drum is pitched to hear
The serpent split the grass before the swish
Is feather in my ear.

I've robbed the land and sea of every wile
Save one—the easy rest. At night I shed
My sweat and shake the heavy lid of sleep
That nails me to my bed.

II

Little men slip into death
As the diver slides into water
With only a ripple
To tell where he's hidden.

Big muscles struggle harder in the grave;
The earth is slow to settle on their bones —
Erupting little mounds and sprouting flowers
Or giving birth to stones.
But how to stand a tombstone
With the ground not quiet yet
And what to say, what not to say
When moss is rooted and the stone is set?

Anne Wilkinson.

ON READING "SHELLS BY A STREAM"

(By Edmund Blunden)

In a green field and looking on
Upon the clouds that crop the skies
I lie and scan
With cricket's eyes
The huge absurdity of man.

True he may crush with clumsy foot
My spires of grass and church-bell flowers:
Yet in his great
Anger at hours
Ignores the cricket's shrill debate.

And shall, in haste for heaven, be foiled
Of root-song, soil-scent and sun-silvered stem
In each leaf uncurled —
The stratagem
Makes of one minute, a whole world.

James Wreford.

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LAWRENCE J. BURPEE

We regret to record the death of Mr. Lawrence J. Burpee, past president of the Canadian Authors' Association and one of the founder's of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*. He was also at one time president of the Canadian Historical Association, of the Royal Society of Canada, and, more recently, was secretary of the International Joint Commission.

A man of outstanding literary ability in both prose and poetry, and of a warmly sympathetic nature,—as shown to many a young author,—and a firm friend, his passing is a great loss to Canadian letters.

DONALD G. FRENCH AWARD

Pauline Havard, of Victoria, B.C., has been awarded the prize of twenty-five dollars, donated by Maida Parlow French, in memory of her husband, for the best poem submitted in the first of the annual "Donald Graham French Award" for Poetry. The competition was conducted under the auspices of this magazine, and the prize winning poem, "The Bridge", is printed in this issue. The judges, chosen by the donor, were Charles Bruce, William Arthur Deacon and J. Patrick Byrne. The competition was restricted to poems of not more than fifty lines, submitted by residents of Canada and not previously published.

There was a high degree of unanimity among the judges with regard to the choice of prize-winner, which was selected from 130 entries. Miss Kathleen Earl, of Gananoque, Ontario, was placed second; Miss Robina Monkman, of Toronto, third; and Miss Helen E. Ross, of Winnipeg, fourth. Those Honourably Mentioned, placed in alphabetical order, are: R. H. Grenville, Victoria; Kathryn Monroe, Toronto; and Anna Letitia Wales, St. Andrews East, P.Q.

SONG LYRIC COMPETITION

Through the generosity of a senior member of the C.A.A., we are happy to announce that a prize of \$50.00 has been set up under the management of this magazine for the best song lyric submitted before April 30th, 1947. The prize is offered as a memorial to the late Donald G. French. The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, states that her award is offered, in the first place, to "honour the memory of one who gave of his best years to the furthering of the literature of this country". In the second place, the donor hopes to stimulate the production of one or more poems of the type which would inspire successful musical accompaniment and so bring about something still lacking in English Canadian literature, a genuine song that "will be sung by all Canadians of the present day, and one that will be sung fifty years from now by their children's children".

The donor further remarks that to merit the award, the poem should be simple and of universal appeal. The prize-winning lyric and any others of sufficient merit will be made available to musicians for the composing of musical settings.

Announcement of the award and the winning lyric will appear in the June, 1947, issue of this magazine, and the prize will be presented during the Vancouver convention of the C.A.A. in the following July.

Contestants may submit any number of entries. These should be clearly typed, double-spaced on quarto paper, and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, if return of manuscript is desired. Entries should be addressed in care of Canadian Poetry Magazine, and clearly marked, on both envelope and manuscript, "Donald G. French Memorial Song Lyric Competition". The competition is open to any resident of Canada, excepting the editorial staff of this magazine. Only poems in the

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English language and under 30 lines in length will be considered. Although the musical potentialities of the lyric will be considered by the judges, musical scores should NOT be submitted with entries. On conclusion of the contest, all three judges (whose names will be announced later) will make deserving lyrics accessible to interested Canadian composers.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

(Including those of our September contributors who were not mentioned in our September editorial).

Patrick Anderson: leading poet and critic of the group of young Montreal writers associated with *Northern Review* and the *First Statement* Press. Author of *A Tent for April*, published by that press, and *The White Centre* (Ryerson, 1946). Contributor to *Chicago Poetry*. This is his first appearance in our magazine.

Selma Bartlett: Ottawa; prizewinner in recent contest spon-

Elizabeth Campbell: young Toronto poet and C.A.A. member. Has won several prizes, including first in national contest in 1940.

Mary Elizabeth Colman: Executive member, Vancouver C.A.A. Author of two Ryerson chapbooks, short stories, etc. Represented in E. K. Brown's Canadian issue of *Chicago Poetry*.

Leo Cox, Montreal: National Treasurer, C.A.A. Author of three chapbooks and a book of poems, *North Star*, Macmillans, 1941.

Gilean Douglas: Vancouver C.A.A. member. Contributor to many journals, including first number of this magazine.

Robert Finch: Professor of French, University of Toronto. One of original *New Provinces* poets; contributor to many anthologies and to the initial issue of this magazine. A first collection of his poetry is announced by the Oxford University Press.

R. A. D. Ford: of the Canadian Embassy, Moscow, U.S.S.R. Translator of modern Brazilian poetry and contributor to several journals.

Donald L. Greene: Vancouver.

R. H. Grenville, Victoria. Frequent contributor to this and other Canadian journals, and prize-winner in poetry competitions.

Ralph Gustafson: Formerly of Montreal, now New York City; author of several books of poetry, notably *Flight into Darkness*; critic and anthologist (*Pelican Anthology of Canadian Poetry*, *Canadian Accent*, etc.)

Ronald Hambleton: editor and contributor, *Unit of Five* (Ryerson, 1944), and *Reading* magazine (recently and untimely deceased). Conducted weekly short story program from Toronto, over C.B.C.

Pauline Havard: winner of the Donald G. French award (see p. 32), and a contributor to this magazine.

Victor Hopwood: young graduate student at University of

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Toronto; veteran; editor of *Campus*, a weekly journal of student opinion.

A. M. Klein: Montreal barrister and lecturer in poetry at McGill University; editor *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*; internationally known Canadian poet; author of several books of verse, including *Hath Not a Jew* (1940) and *Poems* (1944).

Louis A. MacKay: Professor of Classics, University of British Columbia; poet, playwright, critic; recently completed a study of Homer on Guggenheim Fellowship, at University of California. Author of *Viper's Bugloss*, a Ryerson chapbook.

Anne Marriott: National Film Board, Ottawa; author of four books of poetry, including the current *Sandstone* (Ryerson, 1945). Governor General's Award winner in 1941.

Floris Clark McLaren: Victoria. Author of *Frozen Five*, 1937; associate editor of *Contemporary Verse*; contributor to first issue of our magazine.

Mavor Moore: Toronto. Radio and theatre producer, actor, dramatist. Served as Psychological Warfare Officer, overseas. Contributor of verse to *Reading*, *Canadian Review of Music and Art*, etc.

V. C. Moore: Victoria. Captain, Canadian Army.

Mabel L. Payne: Mayne Island, B.C. Member C.A.A.

M. Eugenie Perry: Victoria. Contributor to numerous magazines—short stories, verse, reviews; playwright; woman's editor, *Western Recorder*; author of three books of poetry.

Mario Prizek: young Vancouver artist, poet and story-writer. Contributor to *Northern Review*. A recently completed novel is to be published in England.

Alfred W. Purdy: Trenton, Ont. Author of *The Enchanted Echo*, 1945. Contributor to *Canadian Forum*, etc.

Nathan Ralph: penname of a young University of Toronto student-veteran; author of a Ryerson Poetry Chapbook, *Twelve Poems*, 1941.

William Robbins: Associate Professor of English, University of British Columbia; scholar and critic; contributor to *Canadian Forum*.

A. E. Robertson: New Westminster, B.C. Psychiatrist.

Arthur Stringer: Mountain Lakes, N.J. One of the best known of Canadian literary figures. The long list of his published works (novels, poems, etc.) begins with *Watchers of Twilight*, in 1894. Has contributed to and supported the *Canadian Poetry Magazine* since its inception.

Amelia Wensley: Montreal (formerly of Saskatchewan). Frequent contributor to *C.P.M.* Author of *At Summer's End*, a Ryerson Poetry Chapbook, 1942.

Anne Wilkinson: Toronto. A recent discovery of *Reading* magazine and contributor to the *Canadian Forum*.

James Wreford: Penname of a McMaster Professor of Geography; co-author of *Unit of Five* and contributor to magazines and anthologies in England and Canada.

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BOOK REVIEWS

CAMPBELL, MARJORIE FREEMAN: *Merry-Go-Round*; Ryerson Poetry Chapbook No. 117, Toronto, 1946; 16 pp.; 75 cents.

The long title poem is a dramatic monologue designed to reveal the unsavoury intricacies in the mind of a professional bachelor and seducer. As a study of a fairly significant contemporary type, the city "wolf", the poem has the virtues of originality and satiric point, merits all too uncommon in Canadian verse. The subjects of the eight shorter poems range widely and include a song of Russian farmers resurrecting their earth after the battles, and two poems embodying the poet's grief for the loss of her only son, killed in action in Sicily. Mrs. Campbell writes with rhythmic sureness and melody, though her phrasing is not always equal in freshness to the ideas which she seeks to express.

E.B.

HARDEN, VERNA LOVEDAY: *When This Tide Ebbs*; Ryerson Poetry Chapbook No. 118, Toronto, 1946; 8 pp.; 50 cents.

Twelve short poems in various metres, all competent and one or two, such as "Let Spring Come Slowly" and "Post Mortem", rising above the average by the restraint of the style and genuineness of the emotions. This is Miss Harden's second collection of verse.

E.B.

GODFREY, NORAH: *Cavalcade*; Ryerson Poetry Chapbook No. 119, Toronto, 1946; 16 pp.; 75 cents.

Mrs. Godfrey's first book is a sequence of eight poems, one for each of the years from 1939 to 1946, a cavalcade of the war as chronicled in the heart of a mother whose only son is serving in the navy. The writing is uneven, at times prosy, or sentimental in concept, at times marked by dignity, simplicity and effective imagery. A poet who

can describe war as a "calling for blood to mend the things that men undo" has the poetic gift of epitome, and should not allow herself to slip into passages of diffuse reportage.

E.B.

SASKATCHEWAN POETRY BOOK, 1946-47; Sask. Poetry Soc., Régina, 1946; 36 pp.

The general level of these verses is low, lower than in previous years. There is one finished and moving poem on the war dead by John E. Nixon ("The Unreturning") and some accomplished lyrics by Margaret Osborn. There are competent but undistinguished examples of the work of Nina S. Berg, Margaret Complin, Milton Halliday, Clara Hill and Sylvia Mitchell. The bulk of this annual is made up of rhyming below the level of publishable *juvenilia*. The pages are sprinkled with 'Alas!' and 'thee', with 'fleecy clouds' and 'heaven's plans'. Here 'mother's love will never change', 'Sweet Mother Nature' casts her 'fairy veils', 'true love such as mine will love beyond our mortal breath', and 'the light of love in your eyes for me' gleams in 'sweet perfection' in 'the velvet gloaming' or from 'a cosy ingle'. Here roams 'shaggy Pan' amid 'gentle breezes', with 'Beauty and truth' and all the other dreary clichés of the nineteenth century. 'They tinkle as the water flows'. It is not possible that Saskatchewan contains no poet influenced by the techniques or ideas of the twentieth century, but it would seem to be possible within the circle of those who are responsible for this chapbook.

E.B.

GANTS DU CIEL, No. 11, Printemps, 1946; ed. Guy Sylvestre, 355 rue Wilbrod, Ottawa.

The spring number of this excellent French Canadian quarterly is devoted to a series of essays by prominent English-Canadian critics on the subject of English-Canadian poetry. E. K. Brown writes on 'the Golden Age

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of our poetry', Northrop Frye on our narrative tradition, Pelham Edgar on Pratt, Pratt on Dorothy Livesay, W. E. Collins on A. J. M. Smith, A. J. M. Smith on Klein, and Roy Daniells on Finch and Birney. The issue is remarkable not only for bringing these critics and topics together in a single volume, but for the general intelligence of the criticism, and especially for the attention paid to the subject universally ignored by Canadian reviewers, poetic technique. It is characteristic of the difference between the French and British cultural traditions in this country that the first symposium of real value on our contemporary English-Canadian poetry should appear in the French language and in a journal, however ignorant English-speaking Canadians may be of it, which is superior in appearance and literary quality to anything we are issuing in our language in Canada today.

E.B.

WATT, FREDERICK B.: *Landfall*; Macmillan. Toronto, 1946; 59 pp.; \$2.00.

The second book of verse by Lt. Cdr. Watt is of much the same order as his first, *Who Dare to Live*. The predominant theme is the Atlantic, particularly in wartime; the harshness and dangers of life at sea are in the texture, but subordinated to a romantic acceptance of them as inevitable and essentially exciting. The emphasis is on action and on vigorous physical work. Cdr. Watt is emotionally as well as metrically in the tradition of Kipling, Service and Masefield. Occasionally, there is a flash of imagery, "the march of humpbacked seas", or a thoughtful aside regarding "the unanswered questions that cling like burrs to the silk of victory", but in the main, this writer relies on the simple effects of strong rhythm, direct factual description and the colouring of action. In his treatment of the sea, he is less subtle than Bruce, less dramatic than Pratt. Watt neither stumbles

nor flies; he is never quite banal, but he seldom thinks beyond, say, the easy comfortings the living use to assure the dead they did not die in vain. Yet, there are hints, as in his "Christmas, 1944", that the author is himself dissatisfied with a certain lack of maturity of expression in his work, and there is sufficient that is vivid and strong in his present book to justify the hope that he will overcome the tyranny of heavy rhythms and conventional ideas.

E.B.

LETTERS IN CANADA, 1945; ed. A. S. P. Woodhouse; reprinted from *U. of Tor. Quarterly*, vol. XV, April and July, 1946.

There is a threat in the opening editorial that this, the tenth Annual Survey of Canadian Literature, may also be the last. One hopes that the University of Toronto will find a way to continue the series, for which we have no substitute in Canada. The student of poetry, as of the other divisions of literature, has come to depend on these annual surveys for precise bibliographical information on the year's output in Canada and for the considered and pungent criticism of E. K. Brown. Reviewing "the most interesting" books of English poetry for 1945, Prof. Brown gives primary attention to those of F. R. Scott, Birney, Bruce, Marriott, Bourinot, Layton and Miriam Waddington, in that order. Prof. W. E. Collin reviews French-Canadian poetry with special attention to the work of Francois Hertel and Jovette Bernier.

E.B.

PATRICK DICKINSON: *Theseus and the Minotaur and Poems*; Jonathan Cape, London, 1946; (Clarke, Irwin; Toronto); \$1.50.

Mr. Dickinson's title-piece performs the difficult task of combining with a firm hand the simplicity and straight-

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forwardness demanded by radio broadcasting with the genuine rhythm and imagery of poetry. It is thus an achievement of some significance in a field to which every poet must come as a pioneer. Two-thirds of the book consists of shorter poems. Here, Mr. Dickinson's merits are those of an easy rhythm and natural diction which, in spite of some weak endings and a lack of individually memorable lines, retains the reader's attention. His imagery moves easily from birds to bombers, from private to public concerns. And his ultimate confession is completely human:

I am but mortal still
And seek, all else above,
The Atlantis of my love
Amid the seas of wrath.

R.B.

ABBOT, C. C.: *The Sand Castle and Other Poems*; Jonathan Cape, London, 1946; (Clarke, Irwin; Toronto); \$1.00.

WILLIAMSON, W. M.: (Ed.): *The Eternal Sea; An Anthology of Sea Poetry*; Longmans, Green and Co., Toronto, 1946; 565 pp.; \$3.75.

This is a book not only for yachtsmen, ships' libraries and sailors, but for landlubbers who go down to the sea in dreams. Here are 350 sea-poems from the anglo-saxon "Genesis" (which, by the way, is more likely to have been written by Cynewulf than by Caedmon) to Pratt's "Sea Gulls". In so ample a collection, it is a pity that Pratt was not represented by one of his longer poems, such as "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe". Canadians on the whole, however, are given a fair allotment of space; nine are represented in addition to Pratt: Carman, H. A. Cody, LeClaire, Leslie, McCrae, J. H. Mitchell, Monkman, C. G. D. Roberts and D. C. Scott. Missing (and it is the anthology's loss) are Charles Bruce and, to leave the Canadian field, Day-Lewis, whose "Nabara" is surely a modern

classic among poems of naval action. On the whole, the ancients are better represented than the moderns, though for some reason "The Ancient Mariner" is absent. To compensate, there are many good poems too often omitted from other anthologies, and the total effect is varied and lively. A useful Christmas gift for those with a literary love of the sea.

E.B.

WESTERN SUNFLOWERS: ed. Joan Buckley, Esperanza, Langley Prairie, B.C. Vol. 1, No. 1, Nov.-Dec., 1946. 35 cents. (\$2.00 per an.).

ERNEST FEWSTER: *The Wind and the Sea*; The Vancouver Poetry Society, 1946. Distribution also by the Ryerson Press, Toronto. \$1.75.

Dr. Fewster, for many years a noted leader of the Vancouver Poetry Society, is no longer a young man; but in this, his latest volume, he still maintains a youthful, passionate feeling for nature. The scope of the book is limited ("Wind Song" in eight parts, "A Poem of the Sea" in seven parts, and "Miscellaneous Poems of the Wind and Sea"), and in the two longer portions, especially the approach, is that of the mystic who, in a series of visions, finds himself buffeted and caressed by the ever-mysterious forces of the winds and the waters — forces which may drive him to terror and despair, but eventually bring him consolation and wisdom. The language of the poems, though at times archaic and stiltedly artificial, is frequently richly poetic, and the form, usually based on free, unrhymed lines, shows undoubted skill and good judgment. To those who enjoy the mystical, rhapsodical approach to nature this volume may offer much; but to those who find pleasure in the modern poetic idiom and who seek brave discussion of the profound problems of the modern world, this volume will bring little.

S.E.R.

GRAHAM, VIRGINIA: *Consider the Years*; London, Jonathan Cape, and Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, 1946; 96 pp.; \$1.50.

This small volume of poetry opens with a light-hearted satire on the stodginess of a pre-war county hunt ball, and closes with an ironic lullaby for a child of the new atomic age. In between are poems written during Britain's most desperate years—poems in which gay flippancy, caustic satire, biting irony, and plain good fun mingle with a rich undercurrent of sympathy, understanding, and courage. Basically, the author is a satirist, and, in spite of the occasional nod, a good one. The daughter of the late Harry Graham (author of *The Perfect Gentleman*), she may well have acquired from him something of his satiric wit; but she is good in her own right, and the problems she attacks are those of her own world. Actually, the poems in this volume have all been previously published—mostly in *Punch*, under the initials V.G.—and, for the greater part, they touch on passing phases, or events. But taken as a whole, they serve as a sober reminder (this, in spite of their dominant good humour) of circumstances and happenings all too lightly forgotten—the fortitude of Britain in the “blitz” of '40-'41, the weariness experienced in the long drag towards victory, the jagged nerves of the “buzz-bomb” era, and the untold joy of humble people, who, after years of darkness, looked once again on “tiny trembling newborn lights”:

And their eyes, betrayed, were suddenly filled with tears,
Not having seen such beautiful things for a long time.

In conclusion, it is only right to say that little in this book will survive; by its very nature, it is temporal. But, at the same time, it is a rare combination of wit, satire, emotion, and beauty, and a partial record of a greatness that we have seen.

S.E.R.

PAGE, P. K.: *As Ten, As Twenty*; Ryerson Toronto, 1946; 43 pp.; \$2.00.

DUDEK, LOUIS: *East of the City*; Ryerson, Toronto, 1946; 51 pp.; \$2.00.

ANDERSON, PATRICK: *The White Centre*; Ryerson Toronto, 1946; 72 pp.; \$2.00.

Congratulations to the Ryerson Press. Within the space of a month, they have published, in pleasant format, the first full-scale volumes of verse by three of the most important younger poets in Canada. All three have been known for some years to the readers of Canadian and American literary journals, and Page and Dudek were among the five poets under thirty years of age who were printed in Ronald Hambleton's anthology, *Unit of Five* (Ryerson, 1944). With the immediate promise by the Oxford University Press to publish a first volume by Robert Finch, this year may prove to be the most significant one in our literary history, in respect to the formal introduction of poets of stature.

That these three have stature, despite their youth (and, alas, despite their absence from recent volumes of the *Canadian Poetry Magazine*), is undeniable. All three are thoroughly contemporary in form and in ideas; they have been influenced by Auden, Dylan Thomas, and by such American poets as appear regularly in the *Partisan Review*, but each has digested his influences for the nourishing of an independent mind. Every one of their poems has the stamp of intelligence, sensitivity and craftsmanship. And what is more remarkable among Canadian poets, all three write without sentimentality and without clichés.

The limitations they share are likewise unusual among our poets, and therefore the easier to accept in patience. All three have a certain coldness of atmosphere (Anderson the least), a touch of intellectual standoffishness even

at the moment of enunciating their kinship with the common people; yet even this is an effect rather than an attitude, a by-product of their strongmindedness, their repudiation of easy tearjerking and banal conformity. Their verse is marked too by "an abundance of intellectual concentration" (at times a super-abundance) and by "a preference for word-patterns rather than poetry" and "for the unnatural exploitation of the vivid image".

Perhaps these are faults of which Dudek, at least, is unaware, for the phrases quoted above are his (*Preview*, Aug., 1944) and he applied them not to his own poetic circle, but to eleven alleged professor-poets in Canada, in whom he considered these faults inevitable, economically determined by their "retreat into the ivy-wreathed tower". Now that Dudek is reported to be in pursuit of his doctorate in English, from Columbia University, he may feel in danger of infection, but the truth is that these characteristics were evident in his own work far more than in Pratt's, though less than in Page's or Anderson's during the war years, when he was engaged in the unacademic task of writing copy for advertisers. Perhaps all that is proved is that good poets can be bad critics, especially when newly under the spell of theories of economic fatalism, and that intellectualism and imagic cleverness are general excesses of the poetry of our time.

In P. K. Page's poetry, the psychological element dominates. One is aware of a pertinacity and a deadliness in the probing of mind, her own and others, a clinical interest in the moods of children, the mental habits of adolescents, of prisoners, the physically or mentally sick, landladies, stenographers, business men *l'homme moyen sensuel*. She has an x-ray trick of penetrating beyond surfaces, either of substance or of manner, into the matrix of her theme. It is perhaps significant that "eyes" are a recurrent source of metaphor to the point of an obsession. The psychological portrait is in itself, however,

only the outward cloak, in many of her poems, for an allegorical portrait, for a human pattern pregnant with the moral and intellectual dilemmas of our time. There is a visible progress here from her poems in *Unit of Five* (not included in this selection), progress from an at times hypercritical assertion of separateness to a positive, though somewhat obscurely expressed, indentification with others "moving as we would move and qualifying death . . . As ten, as twenty, now, we break from single thought". As for Miss Page's technique, it is not possible to discuss it with even rough justice in this short space. There is a most subtle variation of cadence in accord with the ever-shifting nuances of her thought; and her imagery is almost as creative as Anderson, in this a *virtuoso*; though more brittle and far less sensuous, it has a sharpness and fantastic logic all its own, as in "The Stenographers":

In their eyes I have seen
The pin men of madness in marathon trim
race round the track of the stadium pupil.

Dudek's collection is more uneven in quality. Some pieces are rather ordinary fragments of imagism or impressionism. In the majority, however, the simplicity is deceptive. Dudek has that rare gift of the true poet, the ability to savor the most ordinary experience with the freshness of a child and to write about it with the subtlety of an adult. "Mystery you hold me in the nearest atom". A myopic old woman looking up at a tree, a piece of paper fluttering out of a window, these are transmuted by a kind of self-honesty and a delicate sense of rhythm into a rich emotional experience. His is the poetry of youth, but yet of youth already amused with itself, with the fact that in spring "even the refuse in the streets looks romantic", and already—because this is mid-twentieth-century youth,—meditating on "the idiocy of avarice, of fear, and of the danger of ideals". There is

the forthrightness of youth here too, for all the gentleness and grace of the writing. "Let social anger", he writes, Make ruins in you like an Aztec temple. Be young— But carry an ax of stone to this murderous civilization.

Patrick Anderson, though the oldest (31), is perhaps the least disciplined writer of the three. He submits himself to the formal discipline of sustained functional rhythms, of rhymes, assonance or consonance, but he is reluctant to discipline his material. Images spout from him as from an oil gusher, spread, change colour and at times completely cover the good earth of meaning. I suspect that Anderson cannot scrap an image once he has conceived it, whatever the cost to the over-all intention of the poem. Unchecked release of image can be justified only if one believes in handing over control of a poem to the subconscious, but the very conscious message in Anderson's poems removes him from surrealist schools and makes it important for him to win the reader to his meaning. Much of his purport, it is true, emerges with re-reading, but some of it is drowned in the imagic tempest. It must be emphasized, however, that such flaws are excesses of a very real strength. No poet in Canada today has given evidence of so powerful an imagination, nor been so effective in the epigrammatic and symbolic use of metaphor to convey genuinely mature and important observations on contemporary life. He is also one of the few poets in our history who has tackled the theme of Canada itself; Canada, not simply as history or maple leaves or wheat, but as all these and also an enigma in human relations, a national illusion and a mysteriously frustrated promise. His "Poem on Canada", for all that it lacks the feeling of experience of the west, for all its occasional over-simplification of history and disproportioned emphasis upon dear Aunt Hildegarde, in England, is one of the most concentrated and sophisticated and thoughtful utterances about this country which has been

written for many a long day—and it is also a poem, in image rich and exciting, and in rhythm always accomplished and often deeply moving.

This reviewer recommends all three books to the attention of the Governor-General's Awards Committee. He doubts if they will have an easy choice.

E.B.

ANTHOLOGY OF PACIFIC COAST POETS

Bern Porter, publisher of *The Granite Butterfly*, *Panels for the Walls of Heaven*, *Hamadryad Hunted*, and other volumes of poetry, is soliciting poets living and writing within 200 miles of the Pacific Ocean to contribute from four to six of their best and most representative works to an anthology of Pacific Coast poets. Canadian and Alaskan poets are particularly desired. Small outright payment will be made upon acceptance; no poems will be returned if unaccompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Address: Bern Porter, 2303 Durant Avenue, Berkeley 4, California, U.S.A.

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BOOKS AND MAGAZINES RECEIVED

NOTE: Unsolicited printed material sent us will not be reviewed except when merit justifies. Space limitations compel us to confine mention of much material to a listing in this column.

BOOKS

Bolton, Margaret: *A Robin Calls*; pub. by author, Queen Alexandra San., London, Ont.; 1946; 32 pp.

Cummings, Virginia: *The Miracle of Dogwood*; pub. by author, Vancouver; 1946; 16 pp.; 25c. Proceeds to Rotarian Social Services.

Davis, Ella M.: *Book of Sonnets*; pub. by author, 1244 Wallace St., Regina; 1946; 12 pp.

Foran, Michael: *Night Flight*; pub. by author, 50 Gilmour Ave., Toronto; 1945; 46 pp.

'Laird': *Poems*; pub. by author, Vancouver; 1946; 91 pp.

MAGAZINES

The Poet's Log Book (Quarterly): ed. V. W. Hess and M. H. Houseweart, Box 235, Benton, Pa., U.S.A. Vol. 1 - No. 1. Autumn number. 35 pp. 50c.

The Span (bi-monthly): ed. Joseph Hoffman, 4036 N. 11 St., St. Louis 7, Mo., U.S.A. Vol. 4 - No. 5. 32 pp. 35c.

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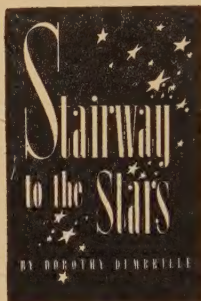
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